

**Policy, Procedure and Programming Recommendations Related to
Parental Responsibilities**

The Children's Services Commission is charged with: "making recommendations which will encourage greater interagency coordination, cooperation, more effective utilization of existing resources and less duplication of effort in activities of state agencies which affect the legal rights and well-being of children in Missouri."

Background of the Parental Responsibilities Sub-Committee

This sub-committee was formed in 2003 in response both to research findings (Dannerbeck 2003) presented to the Commission indicating that many delinquent youth had been subjected to ineffective parenting practices and in response to parenting needs Commission members found in their own communities.

Members: Charles Jackson, sub-committee chair and Director, Department of Public Safety

Anne Dannerbeck, Ph.D., University of Missouri School of Social Work

Tammy Gillespie, Director, Family and Community Resource Program, University Outreach and Extension

Bill Heberle, Director, Children's Trust Fund

Kate Wright, private citizen

Margi Bilyeu, Department of Public Safety

In addition, valuable assistance was received from:

Karen Hoelker, Parents As Teachers National Office

Carol Mertensmeyer-Ryan, Director, Parent Link

Darin Preis, Missouri Head Start State Collaboration Office

Activities: This body met three times to discuss issues, formulate a plan of action, and develop recommendations. A Parenting Responsibilities focus group was held at a juvenile treatment facility with young men, some fathers, and some intending to be fathers in the future. The purpose of the focus group was to elicit information on their attitudes and behaviors regarding parenting, accessing outside help as a parent, and regarding three specific programs widely offered in Missouri: Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and Parent Link.

Current Situation: Many parenting programs and resources exist in Missouri for all types of parents with children of various ages and needs. These programs include traditional day care centers, child care programs that include wraparound services for the family, namely Headstart and Early Headstart, in-home visitation programs like Parents As Teachers, and parenting information resources like Parent Link. Given the high incidence of ineffective parenting associated with abused and neglected children and adjudicated youth, these programs must not be reaching an important segment of their audience.

Recommendation 1

Develop a statewide distribution and access point for information on parenting.

Recommended Plan of Action

- ParentLink could be the statewide contact point. Parent Link provides easily accessible (via toll-free telephone line, internet access, and information kiosks in public places) information about parenting issues to parents, professionals, and communities. Their resources include on-line information about child development as well as community-based programs serving parents and children, expert staffed phone lines, and supports for communities looking to better meet the needs of local youth and families. Recognition from the Commission will facilitate the further dissemination of this parenting resource network and will help in identifying one contact that everyone can use.
- A link can be created from the Commission website to Parent Link.

Recommendation 2

Encourage more innovative distribution of information about parenting programs.

Recommended Plan of Action

- Explore the use of Extension Resource Centers' video interactivity teleconferencing abilities as one approach to expanding access to parenting programs.
- Promote awareness of parenting information to a broader distribution network including faith-based institutions, hospitals, emergency responders, schools, health departments and other public agency offices.

Recommendation 3

Better coordinate programs and activities among publicly funded parenting programs.

Recommended Plan of Action

- Encourage more inter-agency coordination among all branches of government at the state and local level and the Children's Trust Fund in disseminating information on parenting programs.
- Call for a summit of publicly funded parent programs to develop a plan of action to better coordinate their programs and publicize them.
- Work with Community Connections (web-based source of information on statewide community resources) to identify parenting programs.

Recommendation 4

Develop a way to assess and communicate the level of effectiveness of parenting education programs available in the state.

Recommended Plan of Action

- Inform judges about the existence of the assessment mechanism.
- Identify ways to disseminate the assessments to stakeholders.